

THE
OLD TRAIL
BY
JAMES WALTER MORRIS

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THE OLD TRAIL

A STORY OF REBEKAH

BY

JAMES WALTER MORRIS



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THE GORHAM PRESS
BOSTON

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The Gorham Press, Boston, U. S. A.

JAN 23 1914

\$ 1.00

© Cl. A 361709

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ms. Jan. 26 '74

DEDICATION

*To three lovely daughters, Grace, Ethel
and Cleda, this story is dedicated.
May their lives ever be as pure and
noble.*

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THE OLD TRAIL

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CHAPTER I

Down by the Old Well

OVER by the north gate at Haran stood a mansion of the olden type. It was built of partially dressed stone and rested on a broad platform of solid masonry. The walls were thick to make it proof against the excessive heat of summer, the chambers being long and narrow with an archway leading into the main court. The windows were high up and small, being only simple openings in the wall to let in the daylight. The perpendicular walls were topped by a flat roof which always served as a family room in summer. Over the north side was raised a canvas awning for shade during the day. Guests and friends were usually received or entertained here during the evening where they could enjoy the refreshing breezes and the brightness of the star-lit heavens which are never clouded in Summer, being a source of pleasant contemplation to men of the East.

This home was patterned after the more fashionable ones in lower Chaldea, and would naturally attract attention not only for its size, but also for its elevation. From the roof one had a splendid view of the valley, and on approaching the city from almost any direction it was conspicuous, bearing the appearance rather of a castle. It was always open to the stranger, and was known far and wide for its hospitality. Many a dusty, desertworn traveler whose eye sought that place found rest and shelter there.

Whether Bethuel was native or foreign born is immaterial. Suffice it to say that he was of noble ancestry, and had acquired both wealth and influence in Harran. From his ancestors, Nahor and Terah he had inherited both fortune and a good name, and true to the instincts of his race had not left his worldly goods tied up in a napkin. In every sense of the word he was what might have been called one of the first families in Haran. Thrifty, frugal, and yet hospitable he was known to many strangers, even those of rank.

Just north of the city, and on the western slope of the hill, looking out over the river Belik and the valley beyond stood a row of small buildings of the primitive type, and adjoin-

ing these a few large black canvas tents all of which marked out the head of Bethuel's estate. Near by and somewhat in the background was a vineyard, together with fruit trees, a few olives and clumps of shrubery and shade trees of different kinds. Just a few rods below, at the foot of the hill was the great well, with its time worn steps of solid stone. From general appearances it might have been called a spring. Near by were watering troughs of various sizes for all manner of beasts. Beyond these and a little below the main thorofare were several smaller springs that resembled holes in the ground, excavated along the bank, their streams flowing out toward the river Belik. These springs lasted only a few months of the year, and when dry the well was the only source of supply for both man and beast nearer than the river. Along this hillside and the valley were clusters of silver poplar trees, together with sycamore and a few willows, cypress and other small shrubs, while mats of reeds grew by the streams, and in the low marshy places, and a bright green carpet of grass covered the ground everywhere in spring-time, intermingled with flowers of many species and brilliant colors. The estate reached from the river far back to the hills on the east, and

along the old trail leading toward Orfa on the northwest.

The old well with its shades and shrubery became a scene of busy activity throughout many months of the year. Herdsmen and shepherds gathered their flocks there to water and idlers loitered about to catch whatever news might be afloat. It was also a halting place for travelers from far and near. One standing there from morn till eve might see a servant under charge of his master on some errand to the city, or a merchant with his wares piled on the back of a donkey, or a postman on a swift camel going on business for the king. Sometimes a detachment of soldiers stopped for an hour to water their horses and rest themselves under the sheltering trees. More than once had the marshall tread of armies passed along that way, halting at that same spot.

Let us take our stand here by the old well. It is now forty centuries back in history. No railroads with their screeching locomotives that terrorize the neighborhood, and awaken the sleeping baby in its wicker bed. No old freight trains a mile long, running over pigs and sheep, and knocking people's cattle off the track, and claiming right of way thro a man's cornfield or woods pasture. No street cars

butting into your wagon every time you cross the street or turn a corner. No crazy old automobiles prancing up and down the road scaring every old farmer's horses to death. No telephones either, that ring all night whether you want to sleep or not. No sir, we are now where men take the world easy—and are allowed to live till they are nearly two hundred years old.

Let us stand here at the well with its big stone steps down which men and maidens go to draw water for the family, and for the stock. That is Laban, the young man just coming down the hill yonder toward the well stepping rather briskly, and looking now over toward the river. He is really superintendent of the estate, and general business manager, having more than fifty servants and assistants. It is near sheering times and he is giving orders now to those two men to repair the corrals and then go and help bring in the sheep from the range. The man just leaving the tents yonder and leading the donkey toward the north gate is Shuma, a trusty servant that looks after provisions for the camp over in the hills where the cattle herders are. He comes in every twenty or thirty days for supplies and usually takes out a camel-load of stuff. There again

you see a woman coming out of the gate toward the well. No, she is going toward the vineyard over back of the tents and she has a basket on her head, probably going to pick some fruits, or gather garden stuff for dinner.

Yonder are two maidens coming from the West with pitchers, coming for water. Yes, it is the third hour, and they are coming for their usual supply. There will be others along soon, a score or more at a time, and if no men are about they will stop and talk and gossip. If you notice some are quite well dressed. But if you will come back about the ninth or tenth hour there will be many, and later the maidens will return from the fields with their flocks; mostly they are of families of smaller means or fewer servants, tho sometimes daughters of the wealthy are found among them. It has come to be quite fashionable and a mark of social independence among maidens.

Ho! there comes a man on a large camel. O! yes! That is Bethuel himself. Sure, this is the day they were going to see the herd of camels, a buyer was to be there today. And there is Laban now waiting. Yonder are two men coming from the west riding on mules, returning from a ten days trip down on the great river. There were several went down on

a fishing trip, but the others I see are not coming. And I see a company of men going out yonder at the north gate with their pack mules. Those men are going over into the mountain on a hunting trip.

Yes, there are other maidens coming. See! They have met those returning and have stopped to talk. You notice the better class of them are well dressed and are very polite and courteous to strangers. They are not afraid to display their jewelry, nor ashamed of their beauty. More than one love match has been made here. There comes one now from the north gate, bearing a pitcher on her shoulder. She is young and very fair. That is the daughter of Bethuel, called "The Fair Rebekah," She is modest, refined, and courteous to friends and strangers alike.

What a place to go in search of a bride! And yet that is just what makes the place famous and has kept it in memory for the last four thousand years. But we must go back and gather up a few threads of history before picking up this link that fits in the chain of sacred lore.

CHAPTER II

The Morning Land Of History

MESOPOTAMIA—the land between the rivers—is a fertile valley lying between the Euphrates and Tigris, stretching from southeast to northwest a distance of some five hundred miles, and is about two hundred and fifty miles in its greatest breadth; but narrows as it approaches the southern Peninsula. From the well-watered valley of the south it rises by gradual steps to a lofty plain on the north and northwest, held in the embraces of the two great rivers and pierced by spurs of the mountains of Arminia on the north.

This valley, including the lower Peninsula for many centuries known only in history, was once the battle ground of the world. Here different races of mankind contended for supremacy; here the great armies of Sargon, Senacherib and Belshazzar fought and died; here empires rose and fell and nations perished.

Here it was also that some of the Beasts of Daniel's prophecy strove in fierce wars, and trampled down and devoured each other. Wonderful as those prophecies were at the time given one has only to glance over the pages of history to witness the struggles during the centuries that immediately followed. There comes the Medo-Persian Ram in the strength of his two horns, pushing westward and northward and southward till other powers are broken to pieces. Then the Hegoat with the notable horn, coming swift as an eagle in the power of his fury pushing the ram off the stage and trampling his power and dominions into fragments. Last of all appears the fourth Beast, dreadful and terrible, with the great iron teeth and reaching out his paw from the jungles of the Tiber across the Bosphorus and the Euphrates.

But just now we are interested in one only spot in this vast reach of country. In the far northwest is a beautiful tableland known to the ancients as Padan-Aram, extending from the southern slope of Mons-Masius to the Euphrates on the south and west. This particular portion seems to have been set off from the rest of the valley by its geographical situation as well as by its natural resources. It is distinc-

tively a pastoral region; and was therefore sought by those who loved the peaceable pursuits of life rather than the fortunes of war. In the midst of this valley, north latitude $36^{\circ} 50'$ and east longitude 39° lies the old city of Haran. It rests on a gentle slope of the hill looking out over a wide and richly fertile plain. On the west side of the town flows the river Belik, and fifty miles beyond the Euphrates rolls her crystal waters from the mountains to the sea. On the north the country is marked by deep ravines cut in the soft limestone rock, but descends toward the south into a beautiful undulating tableland, broken by a range of low hills that shuts off the view of the Euphrates on the west. Small streams break out during the rainy season, and flowers in rich profusion cover the green hills and valley. The people are chiefly of the shepherd class and the country is rich in flocks and herds.

This city, in the very early centuries, became a military post as well as a center of commerce. There were four great highways leading by, or rather converging at this place; leading from Nineveh on the East, Babylon and Chaldea to the Southeast, Asia Minor on the Northwest and Damascus and the Mediterranean coast on the West and Southwest. It was the eye of

the East and the gateway to the West; and whether the simple-hearted inhabitants cared for military life or not they saw many of the great armies in motion—going out to conquest or returning flushed with victory. It was by this overland route that Cyrus marched his army against Sardis, and Zerxes led his more than a million soldiers down upon the petty states of Greece; and here at this point also in the latter centuries Crasus met his defeat at the hands of the Parthians.

The traveler today will find at Haran the same old beehive shaped huts of long centuries ago; their customs seem never to change. Bare stones without cement or trimming are used; many of them rising in cone-shape with openings for windows at the top. But in the earlier ages some few were more respectable, copied it may have been from other cities nearer the great centers of civilization. There is also a huge castle used as a military fortress, but how early we cannot tell; the ruins of it are seen today.

The country is now in the hands of bedouins, and has been for many centuries. They love the open plain, free life and free air. Over the very same fields and hills where Jacob pastured the flocks of Laban one can see the herdsmen

today; and the maiden, like Rachel of old, leading her father's flocks to water at the well in the dusk of evening; sometimes a daughter of the sheik performs this task, not humble as they see it, but noble and dignified. Here also, women and maidens gather at the well as of yore, visit, gossip and gather news as the bee gathers honey, then shoulder their pitcher of water and return to the city.

CHAPTER III

The Sacred League

UR was probably the most Ancient city of the Chaldees, and her splendors rivaled all others in the early dawn of history. Even before Abram's day there was a high type of civilization in lower Chaldea. The arts and sciences flourished, and architecture adorned the cities with many imposing buildings, including libraries, temples and palaces. There was at Ur a famous temple to the moon god Sin.

This sacred structure was erected on a solid platform composed of sun-dried brick, cemented with bitumen, and standing about twenty feet in height. The temple tower itself consisted of a series of buildings or stories resting one upon another, each being smaller than the one below, the whole rising in a sort of pyramid, and reaching a height of several hundred feet. On the tip-top stood an observatory tower where the watchers of the heavens—the oldest

Astronomers of the world—studied the stars, and gave out from their store house of wisdom for the guidance of kings and common folk. They had quite a complete map of the heavens, named all the signs of the Zodiac, and many of the stars;—all the five planets were known to them by name and worshiped. In fact, they were pioneers in the mystic teachings of polytheism. Astrology and other sciences flourished, and libraries adorned, not only Ur, but many other cities of Chaldea. Their books were not written on paper as ours are, but stamped on soft clay tablets, bringing down to us thro forty centuries the wisdom of long ago, in arts, science, epic and song. Out of the ruins of those ancient cities, covered over, and buried beneath the rubbish and sands of ages on ages these treasures are now brought to light by modern research.

Their history begins really with the Cushite population, following in the wake of Nimrod “the mighty hunter,” and his great military exploits. But in the early times the descendants of Shem drifted from the mountain regions of the north into this more salubrious climate. These semitic peoples brought with them not only the traditions of the fathers and their teachings of the One True God, but also records preserved in crude form from the days of the

flood. It is not surprising that Shem, the eldest of Noah's sons, should have received from his father, not only the covenant blessing, but also the simple notations an account of the Deluge, and the names of all the faithful from the beginning of time. These were bequeathed to him and his lineal descendants as a rich legacy to be kept and preserved for all time to come. How these were indited and in what form preserved is not known, and need not be. But these constituted the basis of the earliest sacred records as we have them today. They were committed to faithful men, and God who has never left Himself without witness in the world, but has preserved unbroken a line of spiritual descendants from the first, has kept these facts engraven by hand, and deeply imbedded in the hearts of His chosen ones.

Preserved and maintained among these early emigrants from the cradle of nations—these descendants of Shem—was this sacred treasure of divine truth. This was the light by virtue of which the Sacred League was founded at Ur of the Chaldees, at a very early time, in order to resist, or check the growing tendency toward idolatry. This was probably the oldest sacred order ever founded, and tho it was unable to check the growing tendency of the age, never-

the-less it preserved untarnished the seed that had been borne across the Flood, and has been borne across the centuries. For a long time kings were liberal, not so much opposing the true worship but blindly confusing it with the multiplicity of deities, and religious forms, even retaining the old time sacrifices and priestly rights. The earliest forms of idolatry together with the worship of the Sun, moon and stars may have been introduced, not to drive the true faith from the earth, but to preserve the religious instinct against irreligion and savagery. It appealed to the stupid imagination of a superstitious age. It is as interesting as remarkable to note the religious revolution about this time under the reign of Sargon I, which swept over the country. Till then there had been more or less freedom of conscience and the people followed their own inclinations, but under this ruler the old vague and indefinite forms and superstitions were organized into a complete system, connected with the study of the heavens, and thus raised to an exalted plane that gave it recognition everywhere. An old statute given, perhaps, under Nimrod, long years before was revived, the heavenly bodies deified and their worship made compulsory. Here may have

sprung the first germs of the mythology of Greece and Rome.

Abraham, while still resident in Ur of the Chaldees, may often have heard the old priest, Astrologers, singing to the moon god Sin the following song, together with many others like—

Father mine, of life the giver, cherishing, be-
holding all!

Lord, whose power benign extends over all in
heaven and earth

Thou drawest forth from heaven the seasons
and the rains;

Thou watchest life and yieldest showers!

Who in heaven is high exalted? Thou, sublime

Who, on earth? Thou, sublime is thy reign!

Thou revealest thy will in heaven, and celestial
spirits praise thee,

Thou revealest thy will below, and subduest the
the spirits of earth,

Thy will shines in heaven like the radiant light;

On earth thy deeds declare it to me.

Thou, thy will, who knoweth? With what can
man compare it?

Lord! in heaven and earth, thou Lord of gods,
none equals thee!

When finally a decree was issued requiring

all men to worship the hosts of heaven,—the Sun, moon and planets, it raised persecutions against the faithful, and caused them to scatter to many lands. There were some wise men, even among the astrologers, who kept to the primitive faith. Among these was one whose name was spelt Melkur-Zudekh, or Melku-Zudekh. He was an astrologer and taught in the royal academy for seven and twenty years. Being a man of great wisdom and in high favor with the king, he was made not only priest, but royal Governor of the Brotherhood of priests. Being of the Semetic stock, he was one of the Sacred League, and held the primitive faith. Unlike most of his associates he saw thru all the wonders of the heavens the handiwork of the one true God.

One morning this Highpriest found one of his fellows offering his devotions, and asked him what he worshiped.

“I worship Bel, the Lofty One” he replied, “because he is the beauty and glory of the day.”

He met another in the evening and asked what he worshiped.

“I worship Sin” he said, “because he is the Lord and glory of the night.”

One evening when they were all together upon

the observatory tower he demanded of each and all what they worshipped.

"We worship the Sun, moon and all the hosts of heaven" they replied.

"But these are not gods" he answered, "these are only the handiworks of one greater than all these, Who made them?"

"We do not know," they all answered together.

"The God of heaven made all these, and men ought to worship Him."

"But," said they, "we do not know Him. How then can we worship Him?"

"Ye cannot know Him," the priest replied, "therefore ye cannot worship Him till ye turn away from your idols." Then he went on to tell them how God in the beginning had created the heavens and the earth and all the hosts in heaven, the sun, moon and stars:—

"But men grew wicked and more wicked, rebelling against heaven, and so God destroyed them with a flood, all but Noah and his family, and through them He preserved the seed of truth, because they were righteous. But men again grew wicked in their imaginations and built the great tower, and so God scattered them over the earth, bringing their foolish work to an end. Now men build temples to

the hosts of heaven and worship the works of Him who created all and so God will bring their works to naught."

"Now you teach contrary to the great king," they said.

"No, but I would teach the great king wisdom and righteousness," he answered.

The old priest then lifted his holy hands toward the heavens saying, "Behold the handiworks of the great and only true God. He made them all, and rules all in wisdom." and then folding his hands across his breast and standing a minute or two in worship, he bowed again and left them.

Some of the wiser of them believed with him and openly declared their faith, being members of the Sacred League, but his teachings at last brought him into variance with his royal master, and compelled him to seek safety.

In his retirement he taught many of the young men who gathered about him. He lived the life of a hermit for years, hiding in a cave where for three years his food and water were brought to him. His habitation became the resort of the faithful, and his pupils almost worshipped him. In this way the great priest did a work that will never die, and kindled a light that will never go out. Among those

who flocked to his school was a former pupil and fellow whose name will appear later. After five years he left his hiding place to travel in foreign lands. From Nineveh he journeyed to Damascus and to Egypt, teaching the people, being received everywhere with great favor on account of his wisdom and piety. At last travelling through Canaan where he visited many cities, he came to Salem of the Jebusites—where he was not unknown to a few. In his patriarchal appearance with his spotless robe and long flowing white beard he was received by the people with great respect and reverence. His wisdom and piety inspired them with a sort of superstitious awe, which grew with time. Within a year after his arrival their native king died in the midst of some tribal disturbances, and the people turned with one heart to the old philosopher—priest, and made him king. For not only had he thrown a sort of magic spell over them, but their enemies stood in superstitious fear of the holy man, lest he might call down the vengeance of heaven upon them. The priest accepted the honor, exacting of them a pledge that they would give up their idols and worship the one true God. They did, and in their confidence under the great priest—king, they grew to be the most power-

ful city amid all the surrounding nations. His holy and exalted character and the pledge exacted of the people which was kept thro all his reign, may have given rise to the first title accorded him as "King of righteousness."

CHAPTER IV

The Immigrants

MANY beautiful legends are woven about the early life of Abraham that would lend a charm to the story we are telling: but one leading fact only need be given. He was called of God to go out into a strange land which he should afterward receive for an inheritance, and obeying the instincts of most all great migratory movements he set his face toward the setting sun. How it came about and the circumstances leading up to it were more natural than commonly supposed. It was no fairy dream either but a struggle, a real soul-struggle in which the patriarch won out by faith.

His father, Terah, was not of the same mind at first. He was a skilled workman and wrought in all kinds of metals and made images for the shrines and also sold them to the people. This brought in quite a revenue. And besides this he had large landed possessions together

with herds of camels and cattle and sheep, so that he was a man both of rank and influence in the city. But Abraham was of a more speculative turn of mind, being a student and fellow of the royal school of Astrology. Under the influence and teachings of the royal priest or Lord-Chancellor, he rose above the common superstitions of idolatry till his pure and spotless soul revolted against such. This brought him for a time into conflict with his father Terah. Sometimes he would reason with the customers who came to purchase images and try to show them the folly of such worship. One day an old man came to purchase an idol, he asked the man if he intended to worship it. He replied that he did, it was his god.

"How old a man art thou," asked Abraham, to which the man replied,

"Above seventy years am I."

"Then thou art older than thy god," he said, "for my father just made that yesterday."

"Don't you think," says he, "that a man of your age in life is foolish to worship the works of men's hands?" Then he pointed him to the many wonderful works of God, the sun, moon and stars, and said, "He only is worthy of our worship."

But these things at last brought on persecu-

tion at the hands of his father and others, so he left the city and fled to the desert where he remained for many months in prayer and study. It was there he sought the old priest and with him sought light and favor from heaven. It was there that the clear call came to "Get thee up and into a strange land that I will give to thee and thy seed for an inheritance." He returned and at last won his father Terah and the whole tribe over to the faith.

No, it was not a lightning express, but a slow train that carried Abraham and his tribe out of Ur of the Chaldees. Slow, though Terah had been to obey, he nevertheless yielded at last to the obedient faith of Abraham and set out with his tribe in quest of a new country where they could worship the One True God unmolested. Imposing indeed must have been the sight, and memorable the day when they turned their backs upon all that men called great. Ur was at that time the most populous city of Chaldea. It lay nearly one hundred and fifty miles on a straight line southeast of Babylon on the west side of the river Euphrates, and in the midst of a rich and well irrigated valley and surrounded by quite a dense population. Many imposing buildings adorned the city, among them the temple tower to the moon god Sin, on

the top of which was erected the observatory where the astrologers studied the heavens, and from which tower Abraham's thoughts first went out in search of the One True God.

Going out from Ur the patriarch on his pilgrimage passed many of the great centers of population. On the third day he pitched his tents within sight of Larsa, on the east side of the river, and only a short distance from its banks. In the dim distance, by the light of the setting sun, could be seen the tower crowned with the glittering shrine of the sun god Shamas, rising far above palace and dome. Then fifty miles farther northwest they came to the city of Erech, one of those founded by "Nimrod the mighty hunter," with its great earthen walls six miles in circumference, and its temple erected to the planet Venus, the ruins of which are seen today rising in a mound one hundred and fifty feet above the level of the plain. Some sixty miles farther on to the Northwest they came to the city of Calneh where they passed under the shadow of the two great temple towers of Belus, "The lofty one," and Beltis his consort. Still sixty-five miles farther on would bring them to Borsippa where stood the famous temple of Merodach, six hundred feet square at the base and rising in pyramid form

over six hundred feet in height. Still passing on they came within sight of the famous tower of Babel, said to have been seven hundred and fifty feet square at the base, and some four hundred and eighty feet high. There stood the old city of Babylon, with her lofty encircling walls, afterwards called "the golden city" and "the beauty of the Chaldees excellency." How the patriarch's soul must have recoiled at sight of this monument to the folly of men, and the many temples and shrines that turned men's hearts away from God.

From Babylon they were committed to the wide open plain and thus for months the distance increased between them and the cities and idols of the lower valley. Through the network of canals, the rich and ripening fields of golden grain, and the over-arching date palms laden with the luscious fruits, they passed on. Abraham was himself the ruling spirit in the pilgrimage. He it was that marked out the site each night where the camp should be, and his spear head that indicated the spot where the stakes should be driven. His faith never faltered in the face of hardship, but like a chief he rode at the head of the procession, spear in hand, with his heart set on God, and his face toward the promised land.

After many weeks of travel they passed the last city of the lower valley and slowly began the ascent to the upper plains of the Northwest, keeping near the great river, stopping here and there on the journey to pasture their flocks and rest. Late in Autumn they crossed the river Kharbour a few miles above its confluence with the Euphrates, and pushing on swung round a spur of the Abud-Ul-Arziz hills into the elevated plains of Pada Aram.

Abraham's tribe were not the pioneers, for Haran was even then quite an old city, having something of a mixed population. Nor did they escape altogether from the scenes of idolatry, for there was a temple to the moon god, and the other deities of lower Mesopotamia and Chaldea had their devotees. The rest of the tribe were content to dwell in the city, for they were more commercial in spirit and looked with less disfavor upon the idolatrous customs of the time. In fact, they found quite genial surroundings at once and were accorded all the recognition and courtesies due to men of their rank. Both Terah and Nahor held the traditional faith and kept up the form of religion, still they were never-the-less men of the world. The city afforded them opportunity for barter and trade, and their landed

possessions were not small, nor had they any desire to seek with Abraham another country, seeing that met all their needs; and it is likely they fell in with the ways of the people in many things. Even down to Laban's time household gods, or images were kept and treasured.

But Abraham stood aloof, making his habitation alone with his tribe upon the open plain, where he could enjoy free life and worship God unmolested. Even then as in later years, he was looking for a city with other foundations, and at length, after some twenty-five years he heard the call that came a second time, and set out in search of country which his seed should afterward receive as an inheritance.

CHAPTER V

The Invasion

BETHUEL, did the servants take those cattle over onto the range this morning?"

"I think so, father, for I told Chessed that they ought to go onto the pasture, as it is getting quite green, and there is now plenty of water."

"Well I am afraid there is going to be another sand storm and they may all be stampeded again. Thou shouldst attend to that at once."

"Why, father, I don't think there is any danger for Chessed is with them today."

"But I see a great cloud of dust rising from toward the south, and if the wind change to the West I know the storm will be on us."

"But it is perfectly clear over to the West, it cannot be a storm or we should see it beyond the great river."

At this Nahor again cast a long and careful look toward the South, whence the cloud of

dust seemed to rise and apparently was driven toward the city. "It will surely be here by the fourth hour of the day," he said.

At last he ascended by an outside stairway,—a flight of steps made of stone and built into the wall. When he reached the house-top he looked out over the plain toward the south, where he could see the cloud of dust rising and yet there was no wind or other disturbance in the atmosphere. About the fourth hour he looked again, and saw the cloud of dust approaching and suspected from its long line the approach of either a caravan or an army. About that time a detachment of soldiers rode up to the well, dismounting, watered their beasts, chatted with the servants and passed a few complimentary remarks about the maidens who had come late for the morning draught of water. From passing remarks it was learned that a considerable army was near at hand, and that an invasion of the Mediterranean coast was to be made. Among the servants and tribesmen there was much speculation as to the objective point of attack, or whether it were some sudden conflict of nations between the East and the West. After a few inquiries as to directions and distances the soldiers remounted and rode off in the direction of Orfa to the northwest.

Before noon, Nahor, whose servants had brought him an account of what had taken place at the well, looked out again and saw the army approaching. As the advance column drew near he recognized the well-known standards of Elam and Shinar, countries far to the Southeast. Slowly the columns moved along like a creature of earth worming its way across our path. As the army swung 'round by the main thorofare it sheered to the west, crossing the river Belik nearly a mile beyond the city. Kedorlaomer with his confederate kings and guards stopped at the well for an hour, rested and refreshed themselves. The brilliant array of soldiery, the glittering chariots and all filled the city with wonder. Nahor was not stupid nor parsimonious with his gifts of costly wine and presents to the great king and his allies. It was to his own personal interest to keep friendship with these powers, and then his communication may have had some reference to Abraham, the faithful, who had only recently migrated to Canaan.

Elam was at this time the ruling power of all the lower country, and had been for nearly two hundred years. Even Babylon was under her dominion. Chedorlaomer, king of Elam (Kudor-la-gamer of history) reigned at Susa and confederated

with him were three vassal kings, Amraphel, Araoch, and Tidal, who ruled respectively over Shinar, Upper Chaldea and a confederation of smaller tribes further to the north. These confederate kings had carried their military exploits as far as the Mediterranean coast, and laid the cities of the lower Jordan valley under tribute; but after twelve years of quiet submission these cities had raised the standard of revolt against their former oppressors.

Chedorlaomer with his vassal kings were now on their way with an army of more than fifty thousand men to chastise these rebellious cities and enrich themselves with other spoils. Nahor not knowing where their blows might fall became anxious concerning Abraham and his family and followers. He therefore kept himself posted as far as possible as to the movements and operations of the army

Passing on from Haran they crossed the Belik west of the city, and the Euphrates over against Carchemach, then swinging South, to Southwest struck the overland trail leading out toward Damascus and the Mediterranean countries. Passing through Berea and Hamath, they came at last to the rivers Abana and Pharpar in the beautiful valleys of Damascus where they halted for several days pitching

camp under the palm trees and feasting on the luscious fruits of the land. After refreshing themselves they broke camp and by rapid marches passed on through the rolling hills and wooded landscape of Bashan, and dropped down into the Jordan valley. Sweeping along the eastern coast of the Jordan to cut off the allies of the revolting cities they struck deadly blows at the war-like tribes, inhabiting the rocky coast and then turning West made a circuit of the Dead Sea, marching through the countries of the Amalikites and Amorites, leaving their chief cities in ruins. Finally turning northward they met the allied forces of Sodom, Gomorrah and the other cities of the valley under Bera, Birsha, Shinab and Shemeber, which were cut to pieces and two of their kings lost in battle. The cities were plundered and Lot and his family carried away with the spoils.

Abraham was dwelling at Hebron in the hill country, now rich in herds and servants, when tidings of these depredations and the capture of Lot reached him. He at once armed three hundred and eighteen of his trained servants and calling upon the friends he had had made among these tribes, this mighty chief set out with a company of nearly a thousand men in pursuit of the invaders. Crossing the

Jordan at the old ford they had passed on to the north some thirty miles beyond the Sea of Galilee where Abraham came upon them unawares. It was dead of night. They were overconfident in the completeness of their victory and unsuspecting of danger. Many of them were drunken with the wines taken among the spoils. Abraham divided his army into three bands for a midnight attack. He knew the army, their leaders, their customs and their weakness. Had he not been trained by them! Was he not familiar with the country! The surprise was complete. The attack from all sides threw them into confusion, and the stampede was beyond all control. Abraham pursued them beyond Damascus recapturing Lot, left behind by the fleeing armies, together with other captives, and returned laden with the spoils retaken from the deserted camp. On his way returning he was met by the new king of Sodom who generously said to him, "Take thou the spoils they are thine, only return to me the captives thou hast taken." But Abraham answered, "No, for I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord the most High God, possessor of heaven and earth that I will not receive anything, even to a thread, or a shoe latchet, and that I will not take anything

that is thine, lest thou should'st say, 'I have made Abraham rich.' I will only receive that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me." This brilliant achievement for which Abraham steadfastly refused to accept any rewards whatever, raised him still higher in favor among those nations about him, and made his name famous above other men. The report of it also reached even to Harran, and far distant lands.

As Abraham, with his trained servants and allies was returning by way of the Jordan Valley he was met in a vale about ten miles north of the present site of Jerusalem by a remarkable personage, who was as much a mystery to the people of that day as he has been to Bible readers since. But he was no stranger, nor mystery to the man whom he came out to honor, for he was none other than the old Priest of the Royal School at Ur of the Chaldees who had been at one time not only chief of the great School of Astrologers, but also the founder of the Sacred League. It was he who first led Abraham into a knowledge of the One and Only True God. It was to him that Abraham resorted in the desert. Finding him there one day weary and faint he carried wine and bread and

water to him, and alone they sought a hiding place in a cave, whether others resorted and learned wisdom at the feet of the old priest. It was in keeping then with the old time relations between them, and in return for the kindness once shown him that Melchizedec brought the bread and wine to refresh the returning hero. He had watched, like an eagle from his lofty eyrie the providential movements of the patriarch and rejoiced in his victory. Then why should not the mighty Abraham now pay honor, and give tithes to this great man, who had been his preceptor and spiritual guide in the former days, and now honored of God in that he was called to be priest as well as king. If Abraham was a type of God offering his son, and Issac a type of the offered sacrifice on Calvary, why not this first great priest of God be a type of Christ both as priest and king. Melchizedec who was neither of royal descent nor priestly line, and having no heir left as successor in either office, became an earthly type of this heavenly priest and king.

It was an impressive scene when this notable personage about whom such mysteries had gathered, came out in his spotless robe, and with long flowing white beard, to meet the hero and conqueror, bringing substantial tokens of bene-

faction; and then to see the same hero with reverence acknowledge his superiority, and offer tithes to him as "Priest of the Most High God."

CHAPTER VI

Rebekah

ONE who has not traveled through a desert in Summer can scarcely appreciate the delight of finding a spring of fresh cool water. The Arabs speak of still as "the gift of God." The summers of Mesopotamia are long, and hot and dry, the traveler times his stages with these favored spots in view.

"The well of Rebekah," as it is called to this day, was a favorite spot to the weary traveler. Here also the cool shade of the trees invited him to pause and rest. One evening a young officer from Chaldea, accompanied by his staff, rode up to the well and calling to some of the servants standing by was served with water. They stopped to talk with the men who had finished watering their cattle, making some inquiries about the city and country. The day had been excessively hot and the soldiers being weary, dismounted and threw themselves on the

ground to rest. The men and servants had all gone but three or four when a maiden came bearing a pitcher on her shoulder. At her appearance the men all bowed very courteously and one of them stepping forward filled her pitcher and returned it with a low bow. She smiling received it from his hand and was gone. The young officer looked at her, half rising to his feet, his eye following her as she went and then turning to one of his companions said, "I have seen many of the fair maidens of Babylon, called beauties, O, My friend, but I swear by the temple of the great god, Merodach, and the altar thereof, I never saw a fairer one than that," nodding his head in the direction she had gone.

"O, my brave young captain," said the other, "have we lost thee so soon? No doubt she hath been waiting for thee all these many summer days."

The maiden was dressed in the best fashion of the time, wearing an easy fitting garment of pure white linen that dropped almost to her ankles, while over her shoulders was thrown a sort of mantle of beautiful tint and trimmed with a gold-like embroidery. On her feet were light sandals, her neck and arms were bare, around her head she wore a broad silken band

and her long black hair fell in tresses down her back. Her face glowed with the beauty of health.

When she was gone the officer rose to his feet and stepping up to the man who had filled her pitcher addressed him saying, "Pardon friend, but whose daughter is that, pray, for I have never seen her equal. Doth her father live in this place, or is she some fair princess from another land?"

"That is the fair Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel, a great man among us," he replied. "His home is the one you see over by the north gate, the large one with the black canvas awning upon the north side," pointing with his thumb over his left shoulder. At this the officer turning to the men gave the word and they all remounted and rode away in the direction of Orfa to the northwest.

Rebekah was now about nineteen years of age, beautiful in form, a little above medium in height, with soft light olive complexion, and very dark eyes out of which she seemed always to smile. Her hair was black, with a slight tendency to curl, and hung in long tresses over her shoulders. She was in the bloom and beauty of health, and life was full of dreams. She caught eagerly at every bit of news that

floated on the air and when strangers or travelers stopped to talk she listened eagerly at every report of doings in the great world outside. Many times she would look out over miles and miles of country and wonder what lay beyond the horizon. Often she would climb to the top of the hill that rose gently above the city and premises on the North and look out toward the southeast with its great teeming cities, then toward the West with its land of wonders, and untold beauty. From the hill-top she could look away through an opening in the bluffs to the great river with its crystal waters ever flowing on to the sea, and see the hills beyond that lay in silent repose amid the haze of desert born winds. Would she ever cross that river! Would she ever see the world of mystery that stretched far toward the sea and the setting sun! Thus the mind was filled with visions and the day with dreams, yet no one had ever marked the traces or shadows of them on her beautiful face.

At evening she sat on the Summer roof and listened to her father tell of the years long ago and the cities of the plain, the country, people, customs and the rich fields of grain, the palm trees, melons, fruits, and all the old folk-lore treasured up in family history. All these

things became to her, not only a matter of history, but as a part of her own life. The pyramids, temples, towers and people became real, and then imagination filled in all that was lacking. She, like most all young people delighted in things heroic. The story of Abraham and his protestant sacrifices, sufferings, faith and heroic efforts for the primitive religion all appealed to her, like the stories of the Old Testament appeal to many a young mind today. The romance of their forefathers' pilgrimage thro the land of many wonders in search of a new home stirred her imagination. But as now she was growing toward maturity of mind all these things had an interpretation—they seemed to lead somewhere, and she began to reason them out. It seemed to her that God had had a good deal to do with it all. He evidently did not like that country to the far Southeast very well, or else the people had not been doing to please Him all the time. What was the trouble? It was clear that God did not like idols, neither did Abraham. If God didn't like them and Abraham didn't like them, then she never could. But why did other people worship them?

One evening Bethuel sat alone upon the summer roof propped in his seat with heavy

cushions, and in deep meditations when Rebekah appeared. At first she paused to see if he were asleep, but he heard the light footsteps approaching and spoke saying, "What is it, my daughter?"

"Forgive me my father," she said, "if I have disturbed thy rest." She walked to his chair and putting her arm about his neck, kissed him. "My father," she went on, "I have been thinking over some things you told us the other evening, but I do not understand them. Wilt thou tell them again to me?"

"Thou art young and fair my daughter, and wise beyond thy years. What wouldst thou have me tell?"

"Tell me, O my father, more about those cities and temples and our people. Why did they leave such a wonderful country?" And bringing a stool she set it in front of him and seating herself rested her chin upon her hand and her elbow on his knee and looked up into his face, eager to catch every word.

"Well, my child," he began deliberately, "it has now been many years ago and I was very young, yet I have heard my father Nahor tell it over so often. Our father Terah was a man in favor with the king. He was a skilled

artizan and made images for the shrines, and helped to adorn the great temple at Ur of the Chaldees. Abraham was taught in the same trade, but refused to make images and mocked at those who bought them. He was also trained in military science, and for twelve years was in the royal Academy, but fell under the influence of the royal Highpriest and others of like faith, and refused to worship the hosts of heaven, so his enemies persecuted him, and so did his father, till he fled to the desert. At last he returned, having had a vision and revelation from God, and persuaded Terah and all the family that it was wicked to make images and to worship the hosts of heaven. He declared that God had made the sun, moon and stars and that men ought to worship Him only. After a long time Terah and all the tribe gave up their idols and left with Abraham for this place."

"But my father, were there idols in this place then as now?"

"Yes, my child, but they did not compel men to worship them, and it was because this land was free from oppression that our people came hither."

"But why, O my father, did Abraham leave this country again and go to another land?"

"Because there were idols here, and he did not want to live with those who worshiped them. He also heard the voice of God in a dream saying, 'Get thee up from among thy people and get thee into a strange land that I will show thee, and I will make of thee a great nation!' "

"But why did not our people go along with Abraham to that country, too?"

"Because we had much property here, and were established in this place, and besides that, we did not receive any call from God to leave this country."

"Abraham must have been a good man to be so favored of heaven. It all seems so wonderful to me."

"He was a good man, and a mighty prince, O, my child. They would have made him chief of this city, but he refused to live in it, and chose to live alone in tents with his tribe."

"But my father, if it is wicked to make images and worship them, is it wrong to keep them?"

"No, my daughter, it is not wicked to have them if we do not worship them."

"Well, father I thought if it were wicked to keep them in the house we ought to destroy those stored away in that east chamber. Why dost thou keep them father?"

“Because, my child, they were made by our ancestor Terah, and were brought from Ur of the Chaldees, and are kept as sacred reliques.”

At this a servant entered and announced a stranger waiting to see the master.

“Let him come,” said Bethuel, “and welcome.”

As the man ascended the flight of steps and approached Bethuel arose to receive him in oriental ceremony, but on taking a second look he recognized an old friend and merchant from Damascus, Shemebeth by name, who had many years before migrated from Ur of the Chaldees and settled at Damascus. Bethuel embraced him warmly and led him to a seat where together they talked long and late, discussing old time acquaintances and the changes the fleeting years had brought. The chief topic of conversation was the latest word from Canaan, the land far to the southwest. Now for the first time Bethuel learned of the death of Sarah, wife of the patriarch Abraham.

The visitor told of the reputed wealth of Abraham and his exalted influence among the princes of the land, how his very name was held in reverence among them because of the Great Jehovah whom he worshiped. Again the story of the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah

was rehearsed, and how it had filled the natives of the land with fear lest the fires of heaven might fall upon them.

"Hast thou heard of the covenant which the God of heaven hath made with Abraham? He is to be possessor of many lands and his kingdom is to be established forever. God, they say, is going to overthrow the nations of idolaters and establish one universal kingdom. Of course I am only telling thee what I have heard. Abraham hath not said it, but his servants speak of it to others."

"Abraham is too far advanced in years for such a thing now. He hath no armies and is too old to lead them if he had. It takes mighty armies and war-like kings for such vast enterprises. Besides that he cares for nothing of power, he would not even be chief of this city when he could."

"What you say is true, O my friend, but Abraham hath a son and the promise is according to reports, that his seed after him are to be possessors of all these things."

"There is hope among the faithful," said Bethuel, "that the God of heaven will overthrow these wicked nations, as he overthrew Sodom and the other cities, and establishing

a new dominion. I do not know how or when and I am content as they are."

The two talked together of the olden times in Ur of the Chaldees, and the faithful that had been scattered, the traditions treasured up in memory, the flood, the tower of Babel, the dispersion of races and tribes, memory serving the place of modern books and daily journals. Serious and sacred were many topics discoursed upon. When finally they arose to seek rest and slumber for the night Rebekah, who had been a silent listener to it all, came out from her hiding and embraced her father for a goodnight kiss. The visitor looked at her wondering, admiring, and said, "This is thy daughter I take it, for I have not seen her since she was a child, but how beautiful and fair!"

Bethuel apologized for not introducing her before, in fact he was unaware of her presence since the man entered. The man laid his hand gently upon her shoulder saying, "The blessing of the faithful be thine," and bowing they retired.

Long after the men were asleep, and the dusty old city was silent, Rebekah sat alone upon the roof and watched the silver crested moon drop beyond the hills far to the west.

Her brain was active still and imagination was on the wing! She thought of The Great Avenging Jehovah, of the New World, if it ever should be, and of that land of wonders far toward the setting sun.

CHAPTER VII

On The Summer Roof

BELZITH, for that was the young officer's name, was a Lieutenant in the army of Babylon, and for meritorious service had been promoted and placed in command of the post at Orfa, some thirty miles above Haran on the northwest.

The story is a long one and need not be told in full. The course of procedure was very simple; the post needed supplies and Bethuel needed a better market; and Laban, who always had an eye to good business, was easily cultivated. Courtship in those days, it should be remembered, differed at least in one respect from our time. Instead of dealing directly with the maiden in the case, the man must first go to the father, it being more of a business transaction, and her consent only a secondary consideration. But it would be easy enough for a brilliant young officer like Belzith, who stood well with the king, and with no small

fortune of his own, to win his suit with a man like Bethuel.

Belzith courted earnestly the friendship of both father and son, and all their business transactions seemed favorable to the purpose, till there came at last to be a sort of mutual understanding between them. The next and last step was easy enough

One evening he stood with Rebekah on the summer roof. The sun was just sinking in the golden west with a refulgence peculiar to those lofty plains. The refractions of light through haze and mist spread a sheen of beauty over the receding hills, stretching far towards the distant river. The soft rays of dying day, left their tints on the fair cheek of Rebekah, while her eyes glowed with the luster of the evening star now blinking and smiling on them as if it knew their secret. He felt himself under the spell of her charms, and lover-like trembled, lest after all he might fail at last.

"Thou hast always lived here," he said after recovering his speech, "and seen but little of the great world. How much like a child thou art, and yet how strong in the simplicity and beauty of thy life."

"I have not traveled far," she replied, "yet I have seen much of the world through the eyes

of others. I have often heard my father tell of the great cities and the people far toward the rising sun, I have also heard others talk of the land of God that lies far beyond the great river. Many times have I climbed to the top of yonder hill and looked out to the distant mountains and the river, and wondered what lay beyond them. I love best of all that land that lies toward the sea,"—and she waved her hand toward the southwest.

"I will tell you," he said, "of a land that is ancient, and cities that are hoary with age,—a land where the gods dwell, and men are all kings. "Ours," he went on—"ours is the cradle of nations, where the immortal gods have made their dwelling from long ago. Babylon, the mother of kings, and the glory of kingdoms was founded by Nimrod, a mighty one in the earth, and established by the immortals who fix the destinies of men. Her armies tread down the nations; her men are like kings, and her women are all decked with gold.

"Let me tell you a story, O fair Rebekah, which I learned from the astrologers at Ur, and which hath been confirmed by the wise men of Babylon: Once on time when the world was young, men grew wicked and the gods were angry at them. Ra appeared to

Xisuthrus in a dream, and warned him that on the fifteenth day of the month Daesius, mankind would be destroyed by a deluge, He bade him bury in Sippora, the City of the Sun, the extant writings, first and last, and build a ship and enter therein with his family and his close friends and furnish it with meat and drink; and place on board winged fowl, and four-footed beasts of the earth and when all was ready, set sail. Xisuthrus asked 'Whither he was to sail?' and was told, 'To the gods, with a prayer that it might fare well with mankind.' Then Xisuthrus was not disobedient to the vision but built a ship five furlongs in length and two furlongs in breadth; and collected all that had been commanded him, and put his wife and children and close friends on board. The flood came; and as soon as it ceased, Xisuthrus let loose some birds, which, finding neither food nor a place where they could rest, came back to the ark. After some days he again sent out the birds, which again returned to the ark, but with feet covered with mud. Sent out a third time, the birds returned no more, and Xisuthrus knew that land had reappeared; so he removed some of the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold! the vessel had grounded on a mountain. Then Xisuthrus went forth with

his wife and his daughter, and his pilot, and fell down and worshipped the earth, and built an altar, and offered sacrifice to the gods; after which he disappeared from sight, together with those who had accompanied him. They who had remained in the ark and not gone forth with Xisuthrus, now left it and searched for him, and shouted his name; but Xisuthrus was not seen any more. Only his voice answered them out of the air, saying, 'Worship God; for because I worshipped God, am I gone to dwell with the gods; and they who were with me have shared the same honor.' And he bade them return to Babylon and recover the writings buried at Sippora, and make them known among men; and he told them that the land in which they then were was Armenia. So they, when they had heard all, sacrificed to the gods and went their way on foot to Babylon, and having reached it, recovered the buried writings from Sippora, and built many cities and temples, and restored Babylon. Some portion of the ark still continues in Armenia, in the Gordiaean Mountains; and persons scrape off the bitumen from it to bring away, and this they use as a remedy to avert misfortunes."

"But thou speakest of many gods. We

know but one—the only true God,” she said with emphasis.

“Thou art young, fair Rebekah, and knowest not the wisdom of the world. Let me tell thee about the great men of old—for there were giants in those days. Nimrod was a mighty one in the earth. He played with the wild beasts of the desert and fought with the kings of men. He made himself ruler of the world and thought to make himself a god and reign forever; but because the people were becoming so great and numerous he was afraid they would separate themselves and establish another kingdom. And so he said, ‘Go to, now, and let us build a tower whose top will pierce the sky, and become the habitation of the gods forever.’ But the gods were jealous and fell into a dispute. At last Ra came down in the night and confused their language—for, they all spoke one tongue. Next morning when they arose to go about their work, lo! they could not understand one another. So the work ceased, for none would even undertake it again for fear of the wrath of the gods.”

“But your gods are only idols. There is one only true God. Our fathers left that land because of idolatry and oppression.”

“What thou sayest is sweet and child-like,

Rebekah, and may be true, but it is not the wisdom of the world. Would thou couldst see the magnificent temples of Babylon. I could take thee yonder to the great temple of Merodach, which rises like the lofty mountains in its splendor. Or, if it please thee better, the temple of the "Seven Great Lights," erected to the Sun, moon and five Planets. It shines in all the beautiful colors of those celestial deities. There stand the golden statues of the gods on thrones of gold, before tables of gold and on floors of gold. How great are these celestial beings who preside over the destinies of men. One must see their magnificence and learn their wisdom in order to receive their favor."

"But tell me more about the people," she said,—“and the women, are they beautiful and happy?”

"The houses are all palaces, and the women are all decked with gold," he replied. "Wouldst thou go, my fair Rebekah, thou couldst revel amid beautiful gardens all the day, and sit under vine and palm tree at evening tide. The gods would smile on thee day and night and thou wouldst be always happy. It is a land of dreams and beautiful women. Once there thou wouldst never leave it—unless the gods stole thee away."

He told her then of his military exploits, and ventures with wild beasts of the desert, of a long voyage once upon the sea. She was an ardent listener, and felt a strange sensation of delight under the soft vibrant tones of his voice. The evening was waning and the silver-crested moon hung low in the west when at last after a pause he turned again to behold the blush upon her face. Stooping suddenly he kissed her, saying, "Farewell, my fair Rebekah. I will see thee again before another moon,"—and was gone. She stood silent and still, listening to the retreating footsteps as he descended the stairs and disappeared in the shadows below.

For a full week Rebekah wandered in a sort of maze. She thought of the wonderful city, the temples, the happy women—and Belzith. How strong and brave and handsome! And withal so gentle. She could not shut him out of her mind if she would, and she would not if she could. He seemed like another brother to her. Strange indeed were the sensations. She had never known love excepting that of kindred, and the peculiar thrill she felt at thought of him was a mystery to her.

CHAPTER VIII

A Battle With Robbers

ONE evening in early autumn, Belzith and five of his companions rode up to the North gate. They were just returning from a ten days chase in the mountains, laden with trophies of their adventures. That evening a feast was spread, Laban serving as host, and the young men feasted to their hearts' content. After many thrilling stories of their adventures and exciting encounters with wild beasts, and being served again with fresh wines, the young men returned to the post at Orfa. But before leaving they promised to entertain the young men of the city with a military drill. It was to come off the next full moon which was now less than three weeks ahead.

Laban was to make all necessary preparations, so far as local accommodations were concerned. For the next three weeks the young men of Haran were excited over the prepara-

tions, and bent themselves to the task. The open field Southwest of the city was converted into an athletic park and the ground prepared for drill and target practice. On the appointed day the soldiers were on hand by the fourth hour, some fifty in number, and helped complete the arrangements. At the seventh hour, one o'clock by our mode of reckoning, the practice began. A great company of people assembled to witness the performance. It was something altogether new to them, but would seem very tame to us in this day of military science and improved munitions of war. Rebekah, with a company of maidens, had a good view from a tower on the southwest wall.

First came the athletic sports in which the young men displayed good training. Their lithe figures and practice in the long marches stood them well in hand. The drill in marches and counter marches, evolutions and skillful handling of arms were highly creditable. Then came the target practice, first with the bow, then with spear or javelin which were the chief implements of war in those times. With the bow the principal target was a wicker shield, covered with bull's hide, at which they shot at a distance of about seventy paces, seldom missing, and usually driving the arrow head through the

shield. The handling of the javelin was still more skillful and more exciting. The instrument was a long shaft with a sharp metal point, which they held in the right hand, balanced horizontally above the head, and leaning back hurled it with terrific force, sometimes splintering a four inch board. It was thrown either as they stood, advanced or ran.

At last Belzith stepped briskly into the ring, lifted his shield, brandished his spear after the fashion of a gladiator. At this ten men leaped into the ring, stepped off sixty paces, wheeled, and each in turn hurled his javelin at him one after another; The people who had been sitting rose instantly to their feet, and stood amazed, but he caught each javelin on his brazen shield or turned the shield so that the javelin glanced off without effect. When all had thrown, one of them held his shield at arm's length while Belzith hurled his javelin with terrific force, driving it through till the point projected a full cubit on the other side. There was a wild cry of "Bravo!" from the crowd.

A soldier now steps forward, handing him a bow and arrow, while another stepped off sixty paces, stops, balances a pitcher on his head, and then Belzith draws the bow till it bends almost double. They heard the twang

of the bow, and the same instant saw the pitcher break into fragments, falling to the ground. The people stormed and shouted their approval. The soldiers fell into line at a word, each lifting his shield and brandishing his spear struck a march and the sports were over. It was the first entertainment of the kind the people had ever seen and the soldiers were praised for their skill.

That evening after a banquet served the young men by the citizens, all of them departed for the post excepting Belzith and some half dozen of his subordinates. He was standing again with Rebekah on the summer roof. The air was cool and crisp, and the belated moon was just climbing above the distant hills. He stood toying with a short sword that hung by his side, looking into her face as she spoke of the events of the day, and praised him for his bravery. He seemed to be studying her face, and reading her very thoughts before making reply,—or rather before making a declaration of love. Just at that moment a soldier came rushing up the outer flight of steps and approaching saluted the captain, and bowing gracefully to Rebekah, hastily reported to Belzith that a messenger had just brought the word that a band of robbers had broken in upon Bethuel's cattle over

on the range east of the city, and after beating some of the servants unmercifully, had driven off more than a hundred head, and taken other plunder besides. There were about twenty of them according to report.

Without waiting on ceremony, Belzith turned to Rebekah saying, "Duty calls, and I must forego the pleasures of the hour. Fair Rebekah, farewell!" Reaching the ground, he despatched one of his subordinates on a swift camel to recall the men who were now on their way to the post, having been gone less than an hour. They were ordered to deploy in two bands, taking a southeasterly direction. He, with the other five men, were to make a detour from the South in the direction which the robbers were reported to have taken. They rode all night, till nearly daylight, when away over in a deep ravine some thirty miles to the northeast, they came upon the band. The cattle had evidently given out and they had stopped to rest. Belzith and his companions were just turning the hill when they heard a lowing of cattle, as though they had been suddenly disturbed. They slipped quietly along till they came close enough to see a smothered sort of fire almost concealed by the overhanging rocks. They thought first to make a dash upon them, but, not being sure

of their number or exact location, they concluded to await the break of day, and then make a sudden dash. Quietly they slipped along the crest of the hill, leaving their mules hitched at a safe distance, and creeping down within a few rods of the camp, concealed themselves among the rocks and waited for light. They were eager for the fray.

Just as the first light crept softly over the hills the men below began to stir. One started to replenish the fire; another went for water from the small stream running down the deep wady; others were readjusting their armor. Belzith counted them fifteen in all. Ten were well armed. To capture the whole band was a perilous undertaking for a half dozen men, and yet the joy of doing it was too strong a temptation for men like Belzith and his squad. They watched their manouvers from their hiding as a wild panther would watch its prey. At last Belzith gave the signal and six arrows flew like missiles of death. Then another and another, till five or six volleys had been fired. One man lay limp upon the ground, and two others were so badly wounded as to be of little service. Belzith called to them, saying, "Lay down your arms and surrender or die, every one of you." "Come and take them!" was the reply, and they

now returned the shots with more deadly aim. There was no time to lose on the part of the aggressors, for their arrows were well nigh spent and they must close in at closer range. Belzith gave the word and they dashed down the hill closing in with their antagonists. When within about twenty or thirty paces they hurled javelins with deadly aim, the volley being returned by the enemy. Three of Belzith's men fell, and three on the other side dropped to the ground. There were now four against nine, for all the robbers were now in arms, all but the six that had fallen. They soon closed in on each other and fought hand to hand with short swords. Three of the robbers closed in on Belzith at once, and would have over-powered him, but one of the Lieutenants, seeing his peril, seized a javelin and thrust one man through just as he rushed upon Belzith from the rear. He bore the other two men down and left them bleeding on the ground.

When at last the battle was drawn, one of Belzith's men lay dead on the ground, two others were badly wounded, and two more had a number of slight wounds. Belzith himself had a severe flesh wound, besides two or three cuts across the face. But the science and thorough training of the soldiers were too much for the robbers,

six of their men were dead, five mortally wounded, and the other four were unable for further battle. The battle was scarcely over when one of the other two squads came up. They took charge of the cattle.

That night Belzith and his squad were received with marks of honor when they reached Haran, but urgent matters called him at once to the Post.

CHAPTER IX

A Dream

REBEKAH had not dreamed of love, and yet it had taken hold of her so deeply that she could not understand herself. Novels were not read in those days, because there were none. Matters of that kind were not talked so much as now, especially before the young. And yet human hearts are the same everywhere, and hearts have always had their loves. Unsophisticated though she was, yet this first contact with a noble young heart of the opposite sex had awakened in her the noblest powers ever planted in the human heart.

Often she thought of Belzith, and as she recalled that memorable night when they stood together upon the house top and he kissed her goodbye, she felt again that strange sensation that made her heart to thrill! And yet she never thought of him as a lover. Her heart seemed rather to be reaching out for something, or someone she had not seen.

In fact, there had been building up in her mind from childhood a sort of fancy, woven out of the many stories and threads of family history gathered from her father and the tribe.

To that was added whatever tales or traditions were picked up from strangers and visitors. Dreams were more common than they are now, because there were no books and the people in their simplicity lived nearer the heart of things. Her thoughts were on fewer things, and yet she thought; and imagination put in all the natural coloring. The story of Abraham, who was called "the friend of God," and all the faithful who held to the worship of the One True God, appealed to her. All these impressions and hopes of a new world-empire began to assume definite form, and a great Prince of some kind would rule. And somehow in her dream she had caught a vision of a real prince and hero who would be a friend of God as Abraham was.

Bethuel noted the change and the dreamful turn of mind, and naturally associated it with the charms of the young soldier. He knew, or thought he knew, that it all was simply the awaking of love's first dream, but never once suspected that God had anything to do with it.

One day Rebekah was returning from the

field whither she had gone. The warm sun of spring time was bright and cheering to a young spirit like hers. Before reaching the well she sat down under a clump of trees to rest. While the leaves stirred gently in the morning breeze and the birds sang above her, she fell to musing; thoughts came trooping, and all the stories and pictures treasured up in memory came at a moment's call. Then she thought again of the land and its cities, and the people far to the South, of the beautiful homes and palaces and temples and gardens and happy women decked with gold—and Belzith! She had not seen him for several moons, but he would doubtless come again soon. She cast a long wishful look up the old trail toward the North. Maybe he would come today. But what of it! Did he care for her, or did she really care for him? Was he really a friend of God, and a defender of the faith like Abraham and other pure souls? If so, she could follow him, she could love him—love him! She had not thought of it before, the idea was new. Love him! She was startled at the thought, and she felt again that strange thrill, and the unfinished declaration on the house-top that evening when they were interrupted. Reclining at last, and resting her weary head upon a turf of

grass that grew on the bank, she fell again to musing. Conflicting thoughts awoke, almost to confusion. Lying there looking up into the infinite blue, and watching the fleecy clouds as they floated toward the West, she thought of the great Infinite Jehovah, and Abraham, the friend of God. Her soul seemed to be reaching out after Him!

With these conflicting thoughts she fell asleep. Out of her vague imaginations there arose a form—was it a dream? Did God send dreams to his servants in the olden times? Could He visit a simple-hearted maiden in a dream? Would He have an all-wise purpose that in any way involved the future and destiny of a pure young life in its first vague dreams of love? We shall see! Maybe it was only a mirage. Did the reader ever see that strange phenomenon upon the desert on a hot Summer's day, when the sand, intensely heated, sent up a glimmer in which the rays of sunlight are refracted so as to make the object stand out as from a lake of crystal water—sometimes reflecting the image of a distant object above the horizon?

But what was it she saw—something like a caravan crossing the desert. It looked as if there might have been a hundred camels. No, there were only—one, two, three, five—ten!

and they were decked with gold, and laden with precious things. Now they came near, halted at the well, and one like a prince alights from his kneeling camel and approaching her asks for a drink. She serves him from her pitcher, wondering at his lordly and gentle manner. Drawing from a case glittering gold and sparkling jewels, he presents them to her, telling a wonderful story of a worthy young prince of untold wealth, and endowed with the richest promises of heaven. He had come from a far, country in search of a wife for this worthy prince. She stood in doubt till she heard the voice of God saying, "Fear not my child, arise and go, doubting nothing, for I thy God will be with thee!"

Rebekah awoke, quickly arose to her feet, startled, bewildered! She rubbed her eyes and looked about to see if she were really alone, but no one was near. Then she looked across toward the river and the hills beyond, she looked again and again, but saw nothing save the monotonous hills beyond which the desert lay stretching far to the West. There stole over her such a peace and such a feeling of confidence. Her heart fairly leaped for joy, while her eyes were dilated with wonderment, and dim with tears! She stood for several minutes

dazed, transfixed with the vision, then took up her walk to the city. Should she tell it to any one? No, she would wait, maybe it was only a dream, but O, the joy of it! Could she keep it?

CHAPTER X

The Caravan

ON the eve of that self same day Belzith, in company with a Lieutenant was riding down from the North. He was in full military dress, handsome, strong, confident. The landscape was beautiful, From the undulating plain covered with a carpet of green, and laden with the breath of flowers he looked away upon the mountains far to the East, and the hills on the West, and beyond them the Euphrates rolled her crystal waters toward the sea. As the two descended the slope they caught sight of the quaint old city of Haran. Belzith pointed toward the mansion over by the North gate with a sigh of relief, saying, "Tonight I shall dictate the terms of surrender."

"But thou mayest be willing to accept terms of capitulation before morning," the other drolly remarked. Belzith would have more important business with Bethuel than at any

time before. There had come to be a sort of mutual understanding between them though nothing to the point had ever been said. He was confident not only of his influence with Bethuel and Laban, but also of the charm he had thrown over Rebekah. Why should he not feel confident, he was in high favor with the king, and could establish his own pedigree beyond all doubt.

As they drew near the well they espied a caravan coming from the West. They halted, counted the camels, ten in all, one man leading the procession and three other men driving the camels, laden with merchandise. The man leading looked like a merchant prince—who was he? They drew nigh the well, halted, dismounted from their kneeling camels. The merchant, or prince, or whoever he was looked about as if expecting some one, and then crossing his hands over his breast stood for several minutes in the attitude of worship. So devout was his manner that the two soldiers sat in silence till the stranger returned to his camel.

“Who is he?” asked the Lieutenant.

“A king, or rather the ambassador I should say,” answered the other.

So occupied with their thoughts and conversation were the two companions that they did

not notice at first a maiden appear at the well and fill her pitcher, till the man approaching her with a most courteous bow asked for a drink of water. They saw her with the greatest alacrity lower her pitcher and give him a drink, and then emptying the water into the trough run and draw water for the camels. The man stood wondering at her till it was all done, and then drawing from a silver case ornaments of gold, placed one on her forehead, and one on each of her arms, while she stood in silent wonder! Now the man addressing her said, "Whose daughter art thou? tell me I pray thee, and is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in?"

She answered with courteous dignity, saying, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bear unto Mahor. We have both straw and provender a plenty, and room to lodge in."

The man again bowed his head, and worshiped, uttering a prayer the observers did not hear distinctly.

"Some notable friends of Bethuel, evidently," remarked the Lieutenant. "But who could they be?"

"Messengers of the king of Damascus, it may be, or the far west. Let us enquire

of the man himself." And the two rode up closer, greeting the stranger after oriental fashion, as the less to the greater. "Come from afar I should judge," Belzith remarked after the formal greeting. "From what country I pray thee?"

"Thy servant is from Canaan, the land that lieth far toward the great sea."

"Going to Babylon, or the far east, may I enquire?"

"This is the end of our journey whither the Lord hath led us," he said.

"Merchant, or representative of some great prince, I should say."

"My master is a mighty prince before the Lord, and I am come on an errand for him. The God of my master Abraham hath not forgotten His covenant."

Belzith marveled at the devout spirit of the man, and stood in doubt as to his mission, whether it were of military import, and whether it had any connection with his own country. The conversation went on after this manner for some time, the officer had not given any particular attention to the flight of Rebekah, in fact it seemed only a few moments till Laban appeared. At his approach the conversation ended.

Laban came running to greet the men who were yet standing by the camels as Rebekah had left them. "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord," he said, "Wherefore standest thou without, for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels.' And so they disappeared, leaving Belzith and his companion, wondering at all that had taken place.

Now the casual reader may have wondered at the readiness of Rebekah to serve the stranger at the well, and receive the presents at his hands, and her excitement as she rushed back to the house to report what had taken place; and lastly her unhesitating consent to go with the man and become the wife of Isaac. Some may have thought her even weak, and wanting in independence of spirit and true womanly dignity. If so, was she worthy to be the wife of Isaac, and inherit with him the covenant blessings promised to Abraham? And did she not in after life show a stronger will and personality than even Isaac himself? How then do we account for these seeming contradictions of character? If the reader will recall the dream in a preceding chapter, together with the natural bent of mind and the lessons treasured up in memory, the story becomes simple. The hand of Providence was

manifestly in it. And we can hardly believe that God was directing all the affairs at one end of the line and not preparing the way at the other end. The appearance of Eleazer at the well that very evening, the camels, the servants and the presents had all been foreshadowed in the vision only a few hours before. How was it? Was it a mirage, that phenomenon often seen on the desert when the reflections and refractions of light in the intensely heated sand mirrors in the sky the image of an approaching army or caravan, or presents more often the deceptive image of cooling springs or lakes of crystal water, luring the thirsty traveler to disappointment and death!

Be that as it may, Rebekah's doubts were all swept away when she saw at the well the very same white camel, and caravan, the counterpart of what she had seen in her dream. God was in it, and her heart leaped for joy, and went out to meet the heart of an unseen lover. There was no occasion for waiting ten days, to allow her companions to dissuade her. It was settled, her lot was to be cast with the people of God. Hereafter she was to be the mother of God's people, and her name to be forever linked with the new Empire over which Shiloh should reign!

And the man came into the house and he ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were with him. And there was set meat before him to eat; but he said, "I will not eat until I have told mine errand."

And he said, "Speak on."

And he said, "I am Abraham's servant. And the Lord hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great, and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses. And Sarah, my master's wife, bare a son to my master when she was old, and unto him hath he given all that he hath. And my master made me swear, saying, 'Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell: But thou shalt go unto my father's house and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son.' And I said unto my master, 'Peradventure the woman will not follow me.' And he said unto me, 'The Lord before whom I walk, will send his angel with them and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house. Then shalt thou be clear from this my oath, when thou comest to my kindred,

and if they give not thee one, thou shalt be clear from my oath'. And I came this day unto the well, and said, O Lord God, of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go; Behold, I stand by the well of water and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw water, and I say to her, Give me I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink, and she say to me, 'Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels; let the same be the woman whom the Lord hath appointed out for my master's son. And behold I had done speaking in mine heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder and she went down unto the well, and drew water, and I said unto her, 'Let me drink, I pray thee.' And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, 'Drink: and I will give thy camels drink also,' So I drank, and she made the camels drink also. And I asked her, and said, 'Whose daughter art thou?' And she said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him', and I put the earring upon her face, and the bracelets upon her hands. And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the Lord God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's

brother's daughter unto his son. And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left."

Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, "The thing proceedeth from the Lord, we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken."

And it came to pass that when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the Lord, bowing himself to the earth, And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment and gave them to Rebekah, he also gave to her brother and to her mother precious things. And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night, and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master.

And her brother and her mother said, "Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go."

And he said unto them, "Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way, send me away that I may go to my master."

And they said, "We will call the damsel, and

inquire at her mouth.” And they called, Rebekah, and said unto her, “Wilt thou go with this man?” and she said, “I will go”.

And they sent away Rebekah, their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham’s servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, “Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them.” And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah and went his way.

CHAPTER XI

The Procession

GOD'S ways become so natural in history that we fail to see anything supernatural in them. Rebekah's departure for the new world and its new relations is nothing more than a common romance to the ordinary reader. In fact all of God's ways are natural, ours are unnatural. But the common place events related in the twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis constitute a golden link in the chain of sacred history and have left their imprint on every phase of life in that place. The same old well called the "well of Rebekah" is there still. The time-worn steps down which she walked to draw water for Eliazer and the camels are no longer seen as of old, being walled up with the well, and men now draw with a cord and water-skin. There the servants gather with their flocks at eventide and thither the maidens come with their pitchers, wearing jewels, just such as Rebekah received

at the hand of Eleazer. With the passing of four thousand years this story and its associations have not grown old.

The departure of Rebekah must have been a picturesque scene to the simple hearted inhabitants. Seated upon a stately camel, resting or reclining under a canopy for shade, her maid servants on another, Eleazer leading the procession, and the menservants bringing up the rear with the other camels packed with Rebekah's belongings and other things necessary to the journey. As they pass out at the North gate they bid a last farewell to Bethuel and the family, the servants following to the well, and swarms of attendants and friends take a parting look. Rebekah takes one long and tearful look over her shoulder at the old mansion then pulling the veil down over her eyes to conceal the tears, is committed to the journey. The procession looked like a caravan starting in line of march, the inhabitants of Haran never forgot it, and tradition has kept the story alive.

Passing on they crossed the river Belik west of Haran, and descending through low hills they pitched camp the first night within sight of the Euphrates. Eleazer gave orders and the black tent was stretched for Rebekah and her maidens. Making her camel kneel he

assisted her to alight. Young though she was and beautiful, she was not unduly timid, as one might suppose, but with becoming dignity she presided over the preparations, commanding her maidens and giving orders to the men-servants, who waited eager and happy to obey. She already enjoyed the sense of her superiority and when the simple meal was ready assisted the maidens in serving. She felt even now that she had entered upon a course worthy of the highest qualifications, and the noblest womanhood. The meal being spread the men gathered about, seating themselves upon the ground, and Eleazer as master of ceremonies lifting his eyes upward toward the stars uttered a few words of prayer and thanksgiving. The impression of it upon Rebekah's mind was effective; it was something new, and it raised the man in her estimation. If the servant could be so good and noble, what must be the son of his master! As the men dined with unmistakable relish, Eleazer entertained Rebekah with a lucid description of the country through which they were to journey.

The next morning at a little past sunrise they took up their journey. Passing on they came to the great River, and turning northward they followed its course, having the river on their

left and the high chalk cliffs on their right. In the afternoon they crossed over and striking the old trail they soon turned again toward the Southwest, passing by way of Karchemas, and Hamath, on toward Damascus. There was little change of scenery all the way only a dry desert with here and there a spring, and maybe a small stream of water which dried up in later season. Now and then a cluster of cypress or a plane tree, or an occasional green spot relieved the monotony. At last, after many days, they reach the plains of Damascus, and the valley of the Abana and Pharpar, when they rest and refresh themselves under generous palm trees, and their eyes feast on fertile fields and gardens where the air was laden with the breath of flowers. To Rebekah this was a foretaste of what lay beyond in the land chosen of the Lord for her future home, and the inheritance of his people. From here, bearing to the Southwest they pass on thro green pastures and wooded hills till at last they drop down the steep decline into the Jordan valley. Crossing at the ford some ten miles below its outlet from the Sea of Galilee they turn toward the South, keeping near the river. On their left flowed the swift, tide of the Jordan, and to the right the hills rose sometimes steep and abrupt, with jagged

peaks projecting out into the valley. But the air was soft and balmy, and sweet with the scent of flowers, while the stately palm trees and olives lent a beauty to the landscape. Sometimes Eleazer would stop and point out to Rebekah the places of special interest. Leaving at last the valley they ascend the hills to the West, and leaving Mount Gerezim on the right they came near the spot where Abraham erected his first altar to the Lord. Rebekah now felt that she was on sacred ground. Halting her camel she folded her hands across her breast as she had often seen Eleazer do, sat for several minutes in silence. At her request they pitched camp for the night. The sun was sinking behind the mountains and the long shadows stretching out across the valley, by the time all preparations were ready for the night. They were drawing near their journey's end, and Eleazer was happy, not so much for the rest as for the joy of his success. The beauty and charms of the maiden had grown upon him every day of the trip, and the pleasure of presenting her to his master's son was beyond expression, he could scarcely wait! And Rebekah was falling into the whole plan as if she felt God had adopted her for his own. The meal being spread Eleazer looked up to heaven

and in long and earnest prayer gave thanks to the Lord who had prospered his journey; and as now they were nearing the end He would strengthen them for the last day. As the shadows grew apace and the stars came out, he talked of the land and its people, and of his pilgrimages with Abraham up and down the country, while Rebekah listened with a delight she could not conceal. Once, however, she thought of home, so far away, and cast a longing look behind, and bowed her face in her hands in vain endeavor to suppress a sob.

The next morning they were off early, and soon Eleazer stopped to point out the spot where Abraham was met by the great Priest-King Melchizedec, on his return from the slaughter of the kings. In glowing enthusiasm he told of the patriarchal appearance of the holy man, and the speculations of the people about his mysterious character. About the fourth hour of the day they passed within sight of Mount Moriah where more than twenty years before Abraham had offered up Isaac as a willing sacrifice to the Lord. It was the first real account of it Rebekah had ever heard. The only halt from there on was a half-hour for dinner. The course was down through a hill country, by short curves and angles across

running brooks here and there, and sometimes a deep wady. Rebekah removed her veil and studied the landscape. The camels quickened their steps as they drew nearer the end of the long journey. At last dropping down by rapid descent they struck an open plain, where herds of cattle were grazing, and flocks of sheep were seen here and there upon the hill-sides. Clumps of trees were growing along the small canyons, and the valleys were well covered with a carpet of grass. Rebekah knew by the steady gaze of Eleazer that they were drawing near the place that marked the end of their trip. Her heart seemed to rise up into her throat, and pound at her breast till it drowned the soft tread of the beast and the tinkling bells on his harness. In her excitement she let fall her veil and the wrap she wore about her shoulders till face and neck and shoulders were bare.

That same evening Isaac had gone out into the fields to meditate. Since Sarah's death he felt lonely, and often sought solitude. Strolling along he cast an anxious look now and then up toward the old trail. It seemed an age almost since Eleazer had gone, tho in fact it had been only twenty-one days; his return could not be reasonably expected for at least ten days

yet. And even then, how long would he have to search for a suitable bride,—and how long wait on her then,—and more than likely fail at last! Thus casting in mind he halted, listened to the drowsy evening song of a bird in the top of a sycamore tree, and watching the sheep slowly winding their way down the crooked path into the valley, he turned again toward the west. The sun was now touching the distant mountains, and the shadows growing long. Isaac was just now in the full strength of his young manhood, and as virtual chief of a great tribe, and proprietor of a vast estate he naturally felt somewhat the importance of his position. Well born and well trained he was a splendid specimen of young manhood; handsome, tall, of imposing figure, and striking in personality, yet of a retiring disposition. Walking alone in the soft light of evening he bore something of a princely air. Reaching the West side of the slope he cast another look over toward the old trail before turning to walk back toward home. The view was clear, the undulating tableland stretched far to the North and West. Scanning again the rising slope toward the North he saw an object just rising from a little depression, but at that distance, more than a mile, the object was not distinct.

Swinging around the curve at last he recognized Eleazer and the camels; but as they were in a straight line he did not see the women, and was ready to accept it as a fruitless errand. However, as they sheered a little to the West, the camels bearing the women came into view. He at once advanced to meet them, moving at an acute angle with the path they were leading so as to interrupt their course just before reaching the tents. Being on a higher elevation his form looked stately against the background of shaded green. His head was bare, his hair was dark, his beard was black and glossy, and his eyes well set under a massive brow. A stranger would have said, "There goes a prince among men."

Eleazer, always looking straight ahead had not noted his approach till Rebekah called to him and enquired saying, "What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us?" She had marked his appearance, and was so charmed with the splendid form and handsome countenance, as well as his princely air that she, quite forgetting that her head and face were uncovered, gazed at him with admiration. "That," said Eleazer, "is my master."

Rebekah at once recovered her wits and quickly drawing the veil over her face straight-

ened up and sat in her usual composure. Isaac, approaching as they halted within a few rods of the tents, saluted Eleazer with the accustomed oriental courtesy and with a low bow offered thanks to the Lord who had prospered his journey, and brought him back so soon. The latter alighting answered with a most reverent bow saying, "Blessed be the God of my master Abraham, who hath not left him without a son to inherit the blessings of the Covenant which he made with my master. He hath prospered me on my way to find a wife for my lord, and sent Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel whom Melcah bear unto Nahor, brother of my master Abraham."

As these words were spoken Rebekah alighted from her kneeling camel, Isaac assisting her, and looking up into a face fair and beautiful. Her hair had fallen into careless tresses down her back, and her radiant eyes drooped just enough with modesty to lend a peculiar charm. As he looked straight into her face he thought he recognized a striking family resemblance to his mother, and at once took her to his heart.

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